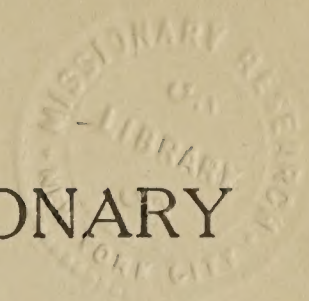


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INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COOPERATION

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Do existing conditions in the mission field make international missionary coöperation not merely desirable but necessary? That is the question to which this paper attempts to provide an answer.

It is important at the start to define clearly the proposal we are considering. It is not a question of supplementing the work of the Boards by the addition of some useful interdenominational agency to care for neglected tasks, but the question whether present real and vital interests of the Boards can be successfully cared for without machinery for international consultation and action. In the history of the missionary movement there have been from time to time fresh developments, such as women's work, higher education and medical missions, and special provision has had to be made to meet these new needs. So it would appear that with the expansion of their work and the increasing complexity of relations in the mission field, the Boards are facing problems for which the only solution is to be found in common consultation and joint action, for which the necessary provision has to be made. If this proposal is true, the work done by the international missionary organization set up by the Boards for their own purposes and to meet the imperative needs of their own work, is just as truly and vitally the concern of each individual Board as the work which falls exclusively under the direction of its own committees. The difference lies merely in the fact that these particular interests of each Board are of such a nature that they can be adequately dealt with only through joint action with other Boards.

International missionary coöperation is not something new. It began more than ten years ago with the appointment of the Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference. There is thus a considerable period of experiment by which to test it. The attempt is now being made to reorganize international missionary coöperation on a more democratic basis, so that the International Missionary Committee will not be, like the Continuation Committee, a group of individuals, but will consist of members appointed by the representative national missionary organizations, such as the Foreign Missions Conference of North America. The present moment, when international missionary coöperation is entering on a new phase, is an appropriate time to test its value.

There are two questions which may legitimately be asked. The first is, What has international missionary coöperation already

accomplished? Secondly, what are the present problems which require international missionary coöperation for their solution?

In answer to the first question one or two illustrations of what has been done through international missionary coöperation may be given. To write the whole story would require a book.

We may take first the new British policy for the regulation of missionary work. The original proposal made by the government in 1917 was that the missionaries of non-British nationality should require a permit to carry on their work within the British Empire. Nothing sinister lay behind this proposal. It arose out of war necessities. The belligerent governments were gravely concerned about propaganda. They saw that subjects of neutral powers, more particularly if they were engaged in the work of education, had the opportunity to carry on undesirable and perhaps dangerous propaganda. They judged it necessary to regulate such propaganda and hit on the expedient to which reference has just been made.

To the missionary societies in Great Britain, however, the proposed solution of the difficulty seemed to be open to grave objection. If the British Government were to adopt a policy of licensing missionaries, other governments might rapidly follow suit, and missionary work throughout the world might very soon be carried on under a system of license. This would seem to place far too powerful a weapon in the hands of unsympathetic officials, and they might restrict the activities of a missionary whom they did not like by threatening to withdraw his permit. All this was immediately represented to the British Government with all the resources at command. The force of the objections they recognized, and the original proposals were modified.

It is important to observe that the threatened danger was averted only because the World Missionary Conference had created an international missionary organization. It was averted only because the risk was foreseen, and a promise was obtained from the government that no new policy affecting missionary interests would be introduced without allowing the missionary societies an opportunity of expressing their views. The danger was foreseen only because there existed an organization charged with the responsibility of attending to questions of this kind. The issue did not affect the work of any British mission, and it was not to be expected that the officers of British missionary societies, absorbed in their own proper duties, would have the time or occasion to anticipate or deal with a difficulty of this kind.

Further, the danger was averted only because the practice of coöperation over a period of years had accustomed the missionary societies to work together, and to act together in an emergency, and because the machinery existed to mobilize the religious forces of Great Britain to take action at very short notice. There would not

have been time to set up the machinery, to get it into working order, and to establish the confidence which must underlie united action, if all this had not already been in existence.

It was represented to the government that any policy which would be satisfactory to the missionary societies must include at least the following features:

First, the policy ought to proceed from an explicit welcome to missionary effort for the moral and material well-being of the peoples whom it sought to serve. The idea of welcome and not of restriction should be the starting point.

Secondly, to show that the welcome was not a mere form of words, American missionary societies at least should be admitted on the same terms as British. In the midst of the war there did not exist on the continent of Europe any organization corresponding to the Foreign Missions Conference of North America in which the government was able to place complete confidence.

Thirdly, it was claimed that the door should be left open so that after the war, as confidence was restored, and as it was found possible to build up an international missionary organization, there should be nothing to prevent the placing of the missionary societies of other countries in a similar position as that accorded to the American missionary societies.

The legitimacy of these claims was recognized and the present policy of the British Government is in accordance with them.

While the new policy introduces a larger amount of regulation of missionary work than existed before the war, it does not appear in any substantial respect to infringe the principle of freedom. It is doubtful whether the old days of unrestricted liberty are possible. The growing complexity of relations makes it increasingly difficult for governments to be entirely indifferent to missionary work. Some measure of regulation seems to be inevitable. While just governments have nothing to fear and everything to gain from the efforts of responsible Christian bodies, it may be necessary for governments to regulate undesirable and irresponsible propaganda, which may occasionally be carried on under the guise of missionary effort. Since the work of missions and governments touches at too many points for either to remain wholly indifferent to the other, the new British policy seems to provide a satisfactory working arrangement for the adjustment of differences which may arise between missions and governments. It is not without advantages that the British Government should officially recognize the foreign missions conferences in Great Britain and North America, and undertake that if any difficulties arise in connection with missionary societies recommended to them by these conferences they will take up the matter in the first instance with the conferences concerned. This secures missionaries from arbitrary interference by individual officials, and

insures that questions which may arise will be settled in conference between the heads of government and responsible church authorities. If a similar understanding could be arrived at between the foreign missions conferences and other governments as well as the British, the condition of missionary work throughout the world would be greatly improved.

An undertaking having been reached with the British Government regarding its policy, attention was turned to the policy of other powers. It was recognized that a number of treaties to which Germany was a party would cease to be valid after the war, and that new treaties would be substituted for them. Most important among these from the missionary standpoint was the Berlin Act of 1885, relating to the greater part of tropical Africa, and including among its provisions, in the most explicit terms, a guarantee of religious toleration and freedom to carry on missionary work. Representations were made to the government, asking that, in any revision of the Berlin Act, the provisions of the Article in question might be conserved. This has been done, and in the Convention signed in September, 1919, by representatives of the leading powers, there is an article in which the signatory powers undertake that "they will protect and favor, without distinction of nationality or of religion, the religious, scientific or charitable institutions and undertakings created and organized by the nationals of the other Signatory Powers and of States, Members of the League of Nations, which may adhere to the present Convention, which aim at leading the natives in the path of progress and civilization. . . . Freedom of conscience and the free exercise of all forms of religion are expressly guaranteed to all nationals of the Signatory Powers and to those under the jurisdiction of States, Members of the League of Nations, which may become parties to the present Convention. Similarly, missionaries shall have the right to enter into, and to travel and reside in, African territory with a view to prosecuting their calling."

The significance of this article, apart from its value for the large part of the African continent to which it relates, is that it establishes a precedent in one of the public documents which form the basis of the new order after the war.

Much time and thought were given to trying to secure that the mandates for the administration of the ex-German and ex-Turkish territories should include similar provisions guaranteeing religious toleration and freedom for mission work. The representations were sympathetically received. At the time of writing the text of the mandates has not been made public, but it is generally believed that they will, to some extent at least, include provisions of the kind desired. The matter is of the first importance, since if adequate recognition of these important principles is embodied in mandates given by the League of Nations, a strong position will have been

secured to urge upon governments in the future that they should bring their practice into harmony with standards which have been sanctioned as right and just by the conscience of civilized mankind as represented in the League of Nations.

Three considerations of the first importance to the Boards seem to stand out clearly as the result of this experience.

The first is that from time to time there may arise unexpectedly in the mission field a situation which threatens the whole position of missionary work in that country. The illustrations which have been given have been of emergencies arising out of the war and the peace settlement, but situations of a similar kind may easily arise in the years before us. There was, for example, a few years ago, an attempt to make Confucianism the religion of the new republic in China. The question of religious freedom is far from being a dead issue, and it is yet to be seen what attitude the governments of Asia as well as of Europe will adopt toward it. The world is in a condition of rapid and far-reaching change. No one can say what the future will bring forth; and among the many surprises which it may bring, it will be remarkable if there do not arise from time to time questions which affect the basis and vital interests of missionary work.

Secondly, if Christian missions are to deal successfully with such emergencies when they arise, it is necessary that they should have a common mind and be in a position to take united action. If missionary opinion is divided and if the Christian bodies are at sixes and sevens among themselves in regard to a vital question of policy, governments will inevitably pay no attention to their views and take their own way. It is essential, when emergencies of this nature arise, that missions should, through long years of preparatory thinking on the broad questions involved, have a clear policy on which they can unite, and should have some common organ through which they can express their views to governments.

Thirdly, experience has shown that, when an emergency of this kind arises, the power to deal with it very often depends on previous contacts gained over a period of years, which make it possible to insure that the question is presented in the proper quarters in the most effective form. To secure such contacts it is a great advantage to be able to draw on the resources at the disposal of all Boards. It may easily happen that a good cause may be lost through failure to handle the situation in the most appropriate way, and the knowledge how to do this is not something that can be gained at a moment's notice, but only through very wide contacts with those who are best qualified to advise in regard to each particular issue which may arise.

We may now turn from the experience of the past to consider one or two of the problems that lie in the immediate or more distant future, and that can be dealt with only by joint action of the Boards.

It seems clear that the Christian forces in the non-Christian world will be compelled more and more to give attention to the large moral issues underlying the relations of the different nations and races with one another. It is impossible to escape these issues. If Christianity has nothing effective to say in regard to these matters, peoples who are subject to oppression or exploitation at the hands of professedly Christian nations will attach greater importance to that which is expressed in acts than to what is preached to them in words, and will close their ears against the Christian message because of their revulsion of feeling against the Christendom from which it comes.

A striking illustration of the truth of this statement is seen in an article by a native of South Africa, the substance of which was telegraphed not long ago from South Africa to the London *Times* newspaper. It was stated in this article that native unrest in South Africa was taking the form of opposition to Christianity, on the ground that it was the white man's religion and must, therefore, be uprooted. "We must fabricate a religion of our own," the natives were represented as saying; "we must unite to encompass our freedom, opposing the white man, tooth and nail."

The British missionary societies have found it necessary within the last few months to take up the question of native labor in East Africa, and to approach the British Government with a request to appoint a Royal Commission to consider how the principle of trusteeship in the government of subject peoples, to which the British nation is committed, may be translated into administrative practice. If the request is granted the result is likely not only to have a far-reaching influence on the British possessions in Africa, but also to react on the policy of other powers having responsibility in the African continent. Justice in the government of Africa and a constructive educational policy on the part of the governments, directed to the economic and moral uplift of the African peoples, are vital missionary interests. Without them the missionary movement may throw itself in vain against insurmountable obstacles erected by the unchristian character of the professedly Christian civilization of which missionaries are the representatives.

What has been said of Africa applies equally to the relations between the western nations and Asia. Here too it is equally impossible for missionaries to escape from the problems arising out of international relationships. They cannot afford to ignore them and give themselves to exclusively and directly religious work. They can hope to win the peoples among whom they labor only if the witness to Christ is faithfully born in the sphere of public life as well as of private conduct.

Yet, while it becomes more and more necessary for the Christian forces to take account of these moral issues in public affairs as an essential part of the work in which they are engaged, it is necessary

at the same time to recognize the extreme difficulty of dealing with such complex questions in the right way. Mistakes can readily be made, and unwise action by an individual missionary or single mission or group of missions may prejudice the position of all missions working in the same territory or even in other parts of the world. The questions to which we have referred can be dealt with only by common counsel and common action. It seems indispensable that the missionary body should make provision for the careful study of such national policies as bear most directly on the work of Christian missions in order that they may be able in the light of clearly ascertained facts and carefully considered principles to unite Christian public opinion in all countries in support of international justice and inter-racial helpfulness and goodwill.

Another great issue confronting the mission Boards at the present time is the position of Christian institutions in the mission field. A fundamental change has come over the entire situation as a result of the increasing concern of governments with education and the steady growth of national systems of schools. In a large part of the mission field Christian missions have been the pioneers in education. But in the future their relative importance is bound to diminish. Quantitatively they must inevitably be outstripped by the expansion of government institutions. From this development there is no escape. Moreover what served the purpose in the past will not suffice for the future. So long as Christian schools were alone in the field or retained a position of leadership they could offer what they liked. But at the present time there are thousands of Chinese students studying in America and France, many of them gaining the highest educational qualifications. These men and those who come under their educational influence will have little respect for Christian institutions which are educationally inferior.

Does it follow from this that the great days of Christian education lie in the past? From the quantitative standpoint there is no escape from this consequence. Yet one is reluctant to accept such a conclusion. And on deeper reflection there appears to be a way of escape, but only on two conditions. The first is that missions should have a united thought-out policy. It scarcely seems possible that the schools of a single mission can maintain themselves against the increasing pressure of the developing national systems of education. But if the Christian institutions stand together and have a clear policy they may be able to secure for themselves a place within the national systems to the immeasurable advantage of the peoples whom they seek to serve. The second condition is that Christian institutions should throw the whole emphasis on quality and make it their aim to build up a certain number of model institutions. This does not mean that missionary institutions must

necessarily try to compete with government institutions in material equipment, nor even in the last detail of technical efficiency. But if Christianity means anything they ought to be able, if they rise to the full height of their calling and task, to turn out men and women possessing a moral character and power of leadership that distinguish them from the graduates of other institutions. To accomplish this purpose it is necessary that Christian institutions should at the same time maintain the highest standards and be profoundly Christian in their atmosphere and influence. These two things are sometimes put in opposition. What is needed is that both should be combined in the highest possible degree.

This alone seems to be a policy with any chance of real success. To give effect to it will demand a strong united effort. It would appear that the educational situation which has just been described would alone justify the creation of the necessary international machinery to secure common consultation, the working out of a common policy and the coöperation required to transform the policy into practice. The mission Boards at large cost are maintaining colleges and schools throughout the mission field. It seems the part of wisdom in a crisis of the kind that has been described to incur the comparative small expense required to bring into effective operation the policy needed to meet the crisis effectively. The Boards must satisfy themselves that they have the machinery which will be able to furnish them with the right kind of policy. But that some effective machinery for common consultation and united action is necessary can hardly be doubted by those whose eyes have been opened to the critical nature of the situation we are facing.

The illustrations which have been given are perhaps sufficient evidence of the services which international missionary coöperation has already been able to render and of its necessity, if the mission Boards are to deal successfully with the problems which are now confronting them. But to what has already been said there must be added a brief reference to the more intangible, and yet perhaps in the end most remunerative and potent results of international coöperation. Those who are most familiar with its inner working during the past ten years can see its effect on the men and women who have most come under its influence. Their outlook has broadened, their experience has been enlarged and their understanding of the problems with which they have to deal enriched by contact with other minds that approach the questions from a different angle and in the light of a different experience and tradition.

The missionary movement, if it is to rise to the full height of its great task, needs the largest statesmanship that it can command. International missionary coöperation is the most fruitful means of

creating in those responsible for missionary administration that breadth of outlook, sense of perspective and deep understanding of questions in their larger bearings which are among the most essential elements of statesmanship. This wider outlook and more comprehensive grasp that are the outcome of international conference, contacts and interchange of thought must inevitably spread from those who most immediately come under its influence through the entire missionary constituency which they represent. Thus there will come to the whole missionary movement from the international Christian fellowship in the advancement of the kingdom of God an enrichment of life and experience that will make it increasingly better fitted to accomplish the task that has been entrusted to it by God.

